



Episode Seven- Injury, illness and bodily fluids

Welcome to episode 7 of Food Safety Bites Brought to you the University of Wisconsin Madison, and funded by the USDA Food Safety Outreach Program, this is your host Harriet Behar. This episode is **a focus on dealing with injuries, illness and bodily fluids**. In these podcast episodes, I will identify issues, and provide suggestions for how to reduce various fresh produce contamination risks and keep your customers safe. We will not talk in detail about what is required for a GAP audit or a FSMA inspection. If you want more information on those, please see the links on the website where you found these podcasts.

This may not be the most appetizing discussion, but it is a very important one. All bodily fluids that could contact produce are considered potentially infectious and could make others sick. While not everyone is sick all the time, it is difficult to assess that and so we should just assume that these fluids could be carrying contagions and like poop, keep them off the food.

Bodily fluids include vomit, diarrhea, feces, urine, blood and saliva. If any of these come into contact with produce or an area where produce is handled, there should be specific protocols that are followed for cleaning and sanitizing the area, to make sure this done properly, as well as limiting the spread of possible disease to other workers. If there is an incident that results in the produce that cannot be sold or eaten, such as blood or vomit present, it is important to document in an injury/illness log what happened, what you did to clean it up, and how the produce was disposed of.

Wounds or cuts happen on farms, since many of our tools and equipment have sharp edges or even moving parts, I have even gotten “paper cuts” from stiff weeds when pulling them out without gloves on! For smaller cuts on the fingers or hand, it is a good idea to clean the wound with drinkable water, use an antiseptic wipe and then cover with a band aid. After it is clean and covered, put a single use plastic glove on that hand. This protects the band aid from falling off, keeps dirt out of wound and prevents any leakage of blood while it heals. Be aware of where blood may have sprayed or fallen, and do NOT harvest any of that produce within a reasonable distance. If you are cutting salad greens in a bed system, you may not see all of the lettuce that would have gotten contaminated, so be generous in the size of the area where you do not harvest. The glove, gauze pads used to clean blood, used band aids etc. should be discarded where others will not be able to touch them. Anyone who may have helped with cleaning and bandaging the wound should wash their hands afterwards.

Along with your handwash station that goes out to the field with the workers, keep a first aid kit. Typical items would include band-aids of several sizes, sterile gauze pads of different sizes, adhesive tape to hold those gauze pads in place, antiseptic wipes to clean the wound, a pair of tweezers, scissors, and non-latex plastic gloves. Antibiotic ointment, elastic bandages, a small splint and safety pins could also be included if you wish. It would not be over kill to include a list of emergency phone numbers too, in case you are dealing with a serious situation, this way, everyone would know where to find the number to call.



Illness - Remember that droplets can become airborne during vomiting or diarrhea. If this has occurred in a produce handling area, not only should the direct utensils, counters or sinks be cleaned, but the floors, walls, bins or shelves that are in the vicinity. Cleaning should be done with an absorbent material to wipe up the liquids, wash with soap and water and afterwards sanitize. The person cleaning up should be wearing impermeable gloves, and the contaminated towels should be put in a separate plastic garbage bag and tied shut. Consider doubling up the bag to make sure there is no leaking. You may also want to go a little further and fully disinfect that area, the extra step for disinfecting is explained in my cleaning, sanitizing and disinfection episode.

Contamination- If the contamination happens in the field, deal with it as soon as possible, somehow mark the area to warn others not to harvest produce there. While there is no specific distance around where the bodily fluid was present to not harvest, Good Agricultural Practices or GAP recommends a 6-foot radius. Remove the contaminated soil and any plant matter, as well as the vomit or whatever using single use plastic gloves and place in a designated strong plastic bag for disposal.

If the bodily fluids, like blood or vomit, ended up on clothing, shoes or cloth gloves, these should be removed, bagged and laundered separately from non-contaminated clothes with hot water and detergent, putting them in a hot dryer is also recommended before wearing them again when working with produce.

Be prepared - Consider having a “kit” put together for worker illness and bodily fluid spills, beyond just the first aid kit. Have some absorbent material like sawdust or vermiculite in addition to paper towels to soak up the fluids. Plastic gloves, plastic garbage bags with ties, and a dustpan to help collect and transfer the material into the bag are also useful. Let the workers know where the kit is located, so the cleanup can be done quickly.

So that's it for this episode of Food Safety Bites, the next episode is training the farm manager and workers. This is your host Harriet Behar brought to you by the University of Wisconsin Madison, talk to you next time!